



April 14, 2004

Central Falls man admits to five bank robberies

Ezequiel Maldonado, of Central Falls, has pleaded guilty to federal bank robbery charges, admitting that he staged robberies at five banks last fall, robbing tellers of a total of approximately \$15,000. Pawtucket police officers arrested Maldonado in December, shortly after he robbed a teller at the First Federal Bank on Newport Avenue.

The Office of the United States Attorney announced the guilty plea, which Maldonado entered yesterday before Chief U.S. District Court Judge Ernest C. Torres in U.S. District Court, Providence. Maldonado, 35, of 386 & ½ Central Street, is detained in federal custody pending sentencing, which is scheduled for July 8.

At the plea hearing, Assistant U.S. Attorney Richard W. Rose said that, had the case gone to trial, the government would have proven that, on December 10, Maldonado entered the First Federal branch at 265 Newport Avenue, Pawtucket, and handed a teller a note demanding money. He fled with \$3,427, some of it "bait money," with identifiable serial numbers.

A short time later, Pawtucket Patrolman David Kelly, driving his personal car, and Patrolman Christopher Lefort, in a cruiser, spotted the defendant's vehicle on Newport Avenue and attempted to pull the car over. Maldonado was arrested after he drove his car into a snow bank. The bait money was found in his possession and a teller later identified him as the robber.

Further investigation established that Maldonado had committed four other bank robberies, each time demanding money from a teller: Fleet Bank, 1000 Park Avenue, Cranston,

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on October 14; Washington Trust Company, 236 Centerville Road, Warwick, on October 16, Bank Rhode Island, 195 Taunton Avenue, East Providence, on October 24; and Sovereign Bank, 272 County Road, Barrington, on November 24. Through bank surveillance photographs, Maldonado was identified as the robber on each of those four occasions. In all five robberies, he took a total of approximately \$15,000.

Maldonado pleaded guilty to five counts of federal bank robbery. The statutory maximum penalty for bank robbery is 20 years imprisonment and a \$250,000 fine. Federal sentencing is determined on the basis of guidelines that rely on such factors as the specific nature of an offense and a defendant's criminal background, if any.

The **Federal Bureau of Investigation** and the **Pawtucket, East Providence, Warwick, Cranston, and Barrington** police departments investigated the robberies. Assistant U.S. Attorney Rose is prosecuting it.

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